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Letter dated 10 December 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 3 December 2007 (S/2007/701), in which the President of the Security Council informed me that members of the Council had taken note of my recommendation to extend the mandate of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) for an additional year, until 31 December 2008.

I wish to inform the members of the Security Council that during 2008, UNOGBIS continued to support national efforts to stabilize the country, focusing in particular on efforts to promote peacebuilding and national reconciliation. To that end, my Representative worked in close consultation with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and other national stakeholders, as well as with regional and international partners, to help resolve various political and security crises, including, in particular, the challenges that followed the dissolution of the National Assembly and the collapse of the Government of the Prime Minister, Martinho Dafa Cabi, in July, the attempted coup and plot to assassinate the President, João Bernardo Vieira, in August, and the recent armed attack on the President's official residence in Bissau. UNOGBIS also cooperated with national authorities in addressing the growing threat of drug trafficking and organized crime.

Activities leading up to the holding of the successful legislative elections on 16 November 2008 included resource mobilization, civic education and the strengthening of the capacities of women's groups. UNOGBIS coordinated the work of international electoral observers and continued to play a lead role in coordinating the country's engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission.

A United Nations Development Programme-financed census of the country's armed forces, carried out in March 2008, was a milestone in the security sector reform process. On 20 August 2008, 30 senior military officers had been transferred from active service to reserve status at a ceremony marking the start of the security sector reform programme. UNOGBIS facilitated an inter-agency security sector reform assessment mission in October, aimed at proposing a United Nations integrated action plan to support the implementation of the security sector reform programme.

Throughout 2008, the Government of Guinea-Bissau continued its collaboration with international financial institutions to improve the fragile situation of the country's public finances and to enable Guinea-Bissau to benefit from debt relief. It also made efforts to put in place the necessary reforms, supported by

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UNOGBIS and other partners, for economic stabilization. However, repetitive political and security disruptions have complicated efforts to improve the country's social and economic indicators.

On 21 November 2008, the Government of Guinea-Bissau requested the extension of the mandate of UNOGBIS for another year, so that the Office could continue to assist national efforts to consolidate peace in the country. I would therefore like to recommend that the mandate of UNOGBIS be extended for an additional year, until 31 December 2009, to allow the Office to continue providing support to the Government of Guinea-Bissau.

Accordingly, the mandate of UNOGBIS for 2009 would focus on: (a) assisting the Peacebuilding Commission in its multidimensional engagement with Guinea-Bissau; (b) strengthening the capacities of national institutions, including law enforcement and criminal justice systems, in order to maintain constitutional order; (c) supporting an all-inclusive national reconciliation and political dialogue process as an institutionalized peace consolidation framework; (d) supporting and facilitating the implementation of security sector reform; (e) extending cooperation to national authorities in their efforts to combat drug trafficking and organized crime; (f) assisting with the promotion and institutionalization of respect for the rule of law and human rights; (g) mainstreaming a gender perspective into peacebuilding, in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); (h) facilitating efforts to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and contributing to the collection of small arms and light weapons held illicitly; and (i) enhancing cooperation with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and other partners in efforts to contribute to the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau.

Furthermore, in reference to my letter dated 28 November 2007 (S/2007/700), in which I indicated my intention to submit to the Security Council, following the holding of credible and transparent legislative elections in 2008, concrete recommendations on transforming the current UNOGBIS into an integrated mission, I have the honour to inform you that I plan to deploy a technical assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau in the first quarter of 2009 to consult with the Government and the United Nations Country Team on integration-related strategies. Following the mission, I would submit recommendations to the Council for action in that respect.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon